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SUBJECT: KAZAKHSTAN: HUNGARIAN-LED BOMCA DELEGATION
EXPRESSES CONCERN ABOUT BORDER SECURITY

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Kevin Milas, 1.4 (b/d)

11. (C) SUMMARY: Ambassador met with a Border Management in Central Asia (BOMCA) delegation on April 6 to discuss efforts to implement European Integrated Border Management (IBM) in Kazakhstan. According to the delegation's leader, General Istvan Samu, Deputy National Commander of the Hungarian Police, Kazakhstan has not been very receptive to sharing information and adopting advice on border management practices. In contrast to BOMCA's experience, the Border Guard Service has been quite open to U.S. officials, perhaps due to U.S.'s much longer history of cooperation with the Kazakhstanis on border security. Samu has been making periodic visits to Kazakhstan to support BOMCA efforts over the last three years; however, his April 2-9 visit was his first opportunity to visit an actual, functioning border post. Samu told the Ambassador he was dismayed that many Kazakhstani border security officials believed that the implementation of a new electronic system has rendered Kazakhstan's borders secure. Samu expressed concern that if a proposed Customs Union between Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus is finalized, more relaxed border controls could render an already vulnerable border more penetrable, posing a security threat to many European countries. The Hungarian general stressed that Russian involvement is essential to getting things done in Kazakhstan, and close cooperation between the United States, the Russian Federation and Kazakhstan will make BOMCA's work easier. END SUMMARY.

12. (C) The Ambassador met with four members of a Border Management in Central Asia (BOMCA) delegation on April 6. BOMCA, which maintains an office in Astana, has worked in close coordination with the U.S. Embassy to help the government of Kazakhstan strengthen its border security. In addition to providing training opportunities for Kazakhstani officials, BOMCA's institutional reform program has been encouraging the governments of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to adopt the principles and practices of European Integrated Border Management (IBM).

KAZAKHSTANIS "NOT OPEN" WITH HUNGARIAN-LED DELEGATION

13. (C) Project leader General Istvan Samu, Deputy National Commander of the Hungarian Police, and his assistant, Colonel Janos Jenei, Head of the Secretariat of the General Directorate of the Hungarian Police, have been working on border management in Central Asia for the last three years. General Samu told the Ambassador that he began working on IBM development in Kyrgyzstan, which shares a common border with Kazakhstan, and quickly discovered it would be necessary to expand the program to Kazakhstan. Despite having worked for several years in Kazakhstan, however, Samu told the Ambassador that, "Kazakhstan has been a relatively closed country for us. This visit is the first time they have really opened up to us." The current program is the beginning of BOMCA's effort to support the development of an IBM strategy in Kazakhstan, and will run from May 2009 through May 2010. (COMMENT: Although U.S. officials have occasionally encountered difficulty in getting access to sensitive border sites, overall the Border Guard Service has been quite open to us in providing information on their training and equipment needs. The difference in our and Samu's experiences may be a result of the fact that we have had a much longer history of cooperation with the Kazakhstanis on border security than Samu and BOMCA. END COMMENT.)

14. (C) Samu told the Ambassador that despite having visited Kazakhstan a number of times over the last three years, his first visit to a border post in Kazakhstan took place on this trip. During his first actual inspection, he was struck by the difference in what Kazakhstani officials claim they do and what they actually do. While Samu said that the new

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electronic system Kazakhstan deployed in December 2008 to cut down on corruption is impressive, it is still under development. (COMMENT: In January, the Ambassador and visiting CBP Deputy Commissioner Charles Stallworth attended a demonstration of the system for 40 members of Parliament. Kazakhstani Customs Control Committee officials admitted at the time that it had been installed at only five of Kazakhstan's 112 border crossing points. END COMMENT.)

15. (C) Samu told the Ambassador, "The Kazakhstani Customs Control Committee seems to think they have solved their border problems in a very modern way, but I have some concerns." First, he pointed out that the system only covers items that are declared, not items that are being smuggled in and not detected. "I have asked Customs, what would you do if items have not been declared?, and they have no answer," Samu remarked. Second, he noted that even if the electronic system works as designed, strengthening border control at established checkpoints will only encourage smugglers to cross Kazakhstan's porous green borders. Customs and Border Guard officers should have the same level of training, he commented, but that is not the case.

16. (C) Samu said that the government of Hungary and BOMCA see this as a particularly troubling problem because Kazakhstan has announced its intention to enter into a Customs Union with Russia and Belarus, under which some border-crossing procedures may be eliminated. In Samu's opinion, if more relaxed border controls along the trafficking route from Afghanistan through Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan render an already vulnerable border even more easily penetrable, this would pose a serious security threat to many European countries. In the EU, Samu stated, protection of the green Border is addressed with a variety of IBM techniques, including mobile units. Samu said that in just the first three days of his team's visit, they had already uncovered significant border security vulnerabilities, including a reluctance to admit problems and consider mobile patrols. "Since I do not see the shape and contour of Kazakhstan's strategy yet," Samu said, "when I meet with the Director of the Border Guards, I plan to ask 'Do you have a comprehensive strategy?'" (COMMENT: Post's INL section has had discussions with, and even provided

equipment to, the Kazakhstani Border Guard Service for mobile patrols. However, given that the mobile patrols are still "under development," it appears the Border Guards did not discuss with Samu's delegation this aspect of their overall strategy. END COMMENT.)

17. (C) Samu explained that the U.S. Embassy was the third embassy in Astana that his team had briefed on their activities. Samu, who spoke in Russian throughout his meeting with the Ambassador, stated that he also planned to meet with the Russian Embassy. "We cannot do anything here without the Russians," he acknowledged frankly, and told the Ambassador that more U.S. cooperation with the Russians would make BOMCA's work much easier.
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